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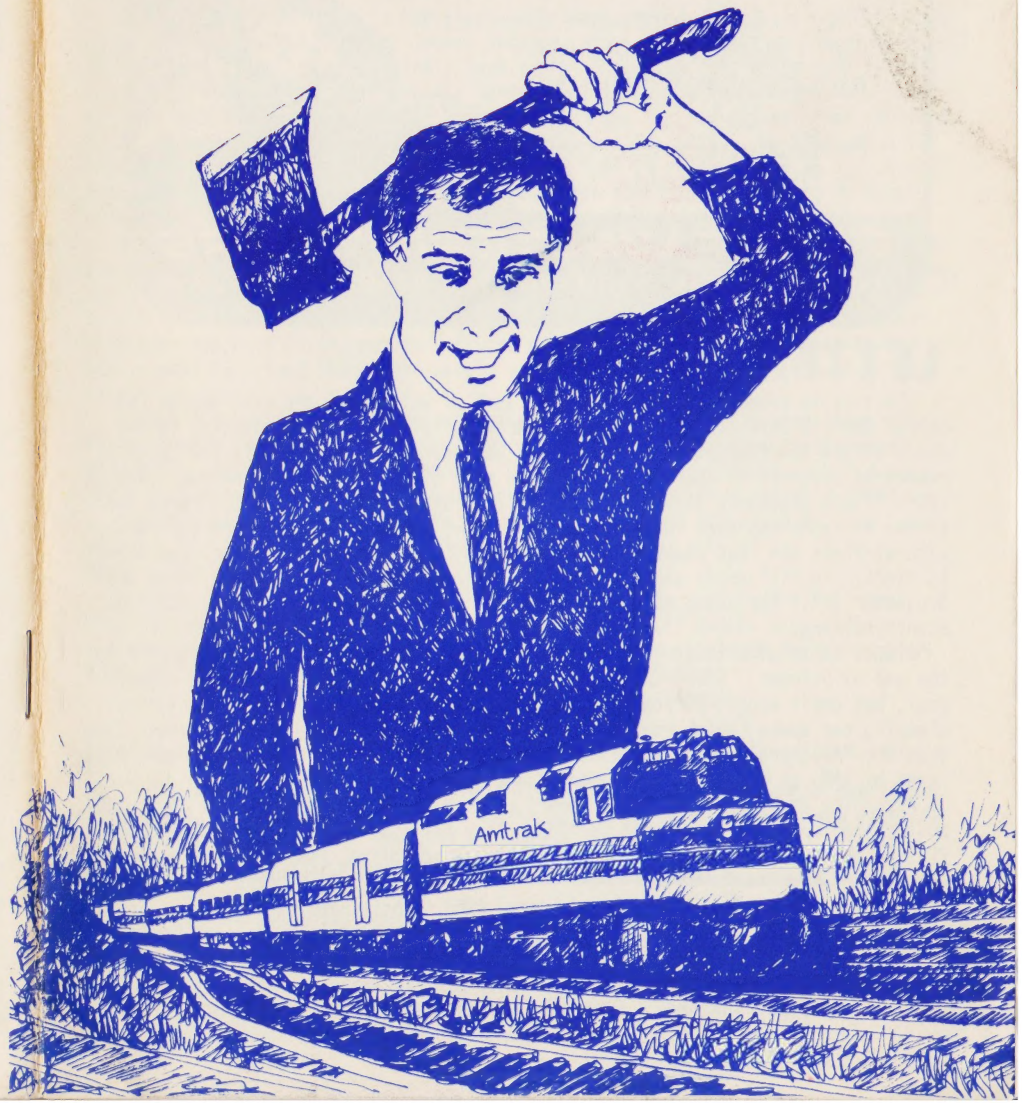
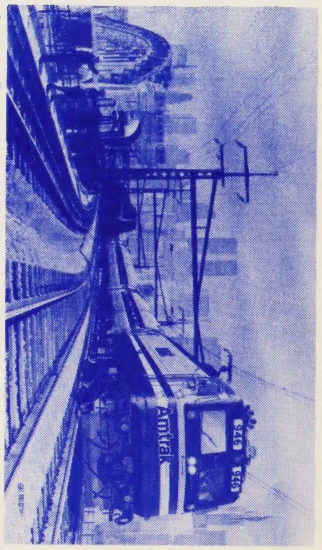


TAKE AMTRAK FROM JANUARY TO DECEMBER.



Amtrak's Boston-bound AEM-7 powered New England Metroliner passing the museum-bound GG-1 on the historic Hell Gate Bridge.

Amtrak's 1983 calendar, pictured here, is now available.

This year's calendar features another beautiful painting by artist Gil Reid, from a series done exclusively for Amtrak.

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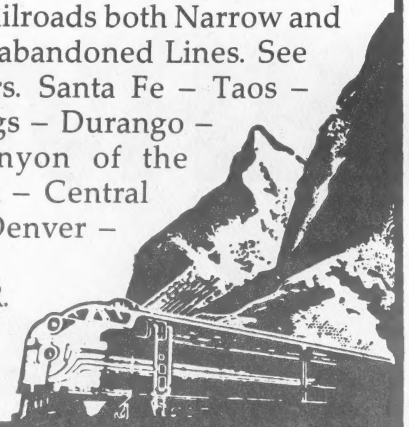

Professionally Escorted by Dick Reynolds

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LETTERS

I'd like to comment on the action, or lack of action, as the case may be, of Amtrak and its Marketing Department. Amtrak certainly is not responding to the needs of the American public during these bad economic times. While you can fly roundtrip anywhere in America for $198, no such discount exists on Amtrak. Amtrak still offers discounts such as Round Trip Excursion Fares, Family Plan Fares and so on, but such has been the case for some time, and similar fares are available with airlines and bus companies. This time of year, few people travel and money is tight. To fill empty seats, American Airlines offered low discount fares from September until Christmas and extending right thru spring. What has Amtrak done? nearly nothing.

Almost as an afterthought, Amtrak offered its "Anywhere Fare" from August 1 to the end of October. $225 roundtrip to anywhere on the Amtrak system was a good deal, but until August 30 you still had to pay standard rail fare if you wanted sleeping car space (which had a 25% surcharge added during the summer months), and when the "Anywhere Fare" experiment ended October 31, Amtrak promptly hiked all its fares by 3½%, as it always does every fall.

According to U.S. News & World Report, Amtrak fares went up by about 9% in 1982, and will go up a similar amount in 1983. They will have exceeded the rate of inflation by 3½%-4%. Because of intercity bus deregulation, bus fares are expected to drop in 1983, and in spite of increasing the basic overall airline fares in 1983, it's obvious that airlines have many promotional gimmicks designed to keep their seats filled.

Amtrak, on the other hand, has announced no reduced special fares as it enters the slowest travel season (on most routes, anyway). Are Amtrak trains so well-patronized that no such discounts are necessary? Hardly. Ridership is way down. People just can't afford to travel by train.

What purpose does Amtrak's Marketing Department serve? It surely doesn't appear to be doing much. In off-peak travel seasons, why not implement an "Anywhere Fare"? It did boost ridership considerably last year. Or better yet, bring back an off-season USA Rail Pass just like VIA's Canrailpass. I would think Amtrak could do well to initiate another Canadian marketing program, the now-defunct "Red, White & Blue" fare system, offered by Canadian National and in the U.S. by B&O, which is often considered the most successful marketing tool in recent years as far as rail travel goes. Whatever the plan, Amtrak should do something--anything, to boost ridership.

I realize Amtrak is mandated by Congress to increase revenue/costs ratios, but how are empty trains going to accomplish this? Keeping costs in line is one thing, but ultimately, Amtrak will be judged by the amount of public good it provides--by HOW MANY PEOPLE RIDE IT. After all, recent discontinuances of Amtrak trains have been based on PM/TM, not deficit per route. Getting people to ride is the single most important thing, and people won't ride if the price is too high, and it is.

Amtrak's current Marketing Department would have fit right in with those of the railroads in the 1960s when certain railroads were attempting to discourage ridership. Amtrak does have potential, but it has to prove itself. That's only going to happen if there are adequate numbers of people riding Amtrak's brand new or refurbished, on-time trains. People will return again and again to a well-run service, but if the price is too high, they may never be able to try it in the first place.

In closing, Amtrak and its Marketing Department better get in the ball game, or else the game's going to be over before they know it. If people keep riding the trains, the trains will continue to run. If high fares eliminate adequate ridership, Amtrak itself will be eliminated. Get with it, Amtrak.

Amtrak Employee, Name Withheld
Montana

(See the report on Amtrak's new "All Aboard Fare" elsewhere in this issue.--Ed.)

I told you so. You always ignored what I said, never commenting or publishing my letters, but I told you so. Here is the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA: things might be better with the train, RTN says, if "...Amtrak had been more generous with it..." Doesn't that sound like something I was saying about Amtrak and the NORTH STAR between Twin Cities and Chicago?

When are you going to finally admit that Amtrak is totally incompetent when it comes to operating an overnight train, especially where there is an opposing daylight train? Amtrak seems incapable of understanding that the only people who would normally travel overnight on a train are businesspeople who HAVE to leave origin sometime after 4pm and HAVE to arrive sometime around 8 or 9am.

(continued on page 23)

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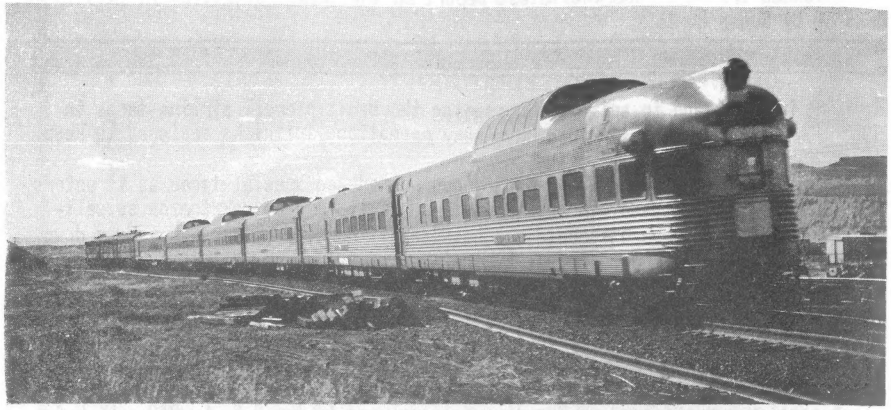
ON THE COVER

Governor George Deukmejian prepares to axe the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA (and other state-funded trains). See the latest report on the crisis situation in this issue. Drawing by Susan Boria.

AMTRAK MAY TAKE OVER RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR ROUTE; WILL RUN TEST TRAIN.



Westbound RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR at Green River, Utah. Photo by Peter Bretz.

Amtrak will run a test train of Superliner cars on the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR route in February, an obvious first step to a possible takeover of the route from the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway. The test train will operate from Denver to Salt Lake City on Feb 7 and from Salt Lake to Denver on Feb 8, running in place of the regular RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR, and carrying revenue passengers. Two F40 Amtrak engines will be used, and probably 10 Superliner cars. D&RGW on-board crews will work the trains.

Amtrak refused to comment on this matter, but it is known that Rio Grande has recently had discussions with Amtrak, evidently on the subject of Amtrak's taking over its passenger service, which would require that the railroad join Amtrak. Why would D&RGW suddenly decide it wanted to join Amtrak? The answer would appear to be that if another railroad tried to take over the D&RGW, the latter would be in a stronger negotiating position if it were a member of Amtrak and no longer bearing its claimed $3 million per year deficit on RGZ operations.

Who might want to take over D&RGW? The Southern Pacific, for one. The UP-WP-MoPac merger has SP very worried about competition. SP's Oakland-Ogden line would be much more valuable with a reliable connection to the East. With the UP-WP-MP merger, Rio Grande obtained trackage rights on MP Pueblo-Kansas City. SP has already obtained trackage rights on MP from Kansas City to St. Louis, Thus, acquiring Rio Grande would give SP its own tracks all the way from the West Coast to St. Louis, where connections are made with Conrail, Chessie System and Norfolk Southern. This would also mean a great increase in business on Rio Grande's Royal Gorge-Tennessee Pass route.

If Amtrak re-routed the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR over the Rio Grande line, patronage increases would probably be substantial, for the change would place the ski resorts and dude ranches only an overnight train ride away from all major West Coast cities as well as from Chicago and Omaha-Lincoln.

Since an impending changeover to Amtrak could occur rather quickly, admirers of the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR will be making haste to obtain last rides on the train before a change to Superliner equipment. Whether operation under Amtrak would mean daily service, and what would happen to service in Wyoming if the SFZ were switched to the Utah-Colorado route are two questions that can only be asked but not answered at this time.

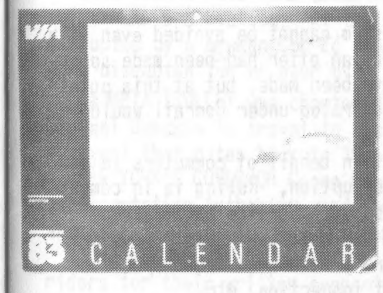
(See late news item on page 20.)

RAIL CANADA

THE NEW "INTERNATIONAL" is already exceeding its ridership forecasts, VIA Rail said late last year. Close to 100 riders total per day have been using the new Chicago-Toronto service, while predictions were for a maximum of 80. During the recent holiday period, ridership probably exceeded even the 100 mark.

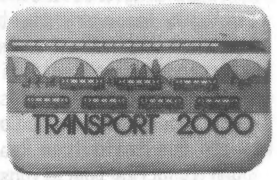
EDMONTON-CLAGARY PROVISIONAL service, a one-year trial, is now expected to begin on Apr 1, 1983. On Oct 31 VIA increased weekend service on the route, a first step in improving operations in the corridor. VIA must obtain operating rights between the South Edmonton station and the downtown Edmonton station in order to put the full trial service into effect.

CP'S WINNIPEG YARD was the scene of a locomotive crash and explosion on Dec 13, apparently set in motion by vandals. Six locomotives were being assembled, and someone sent them moving forward, sideswiping another loco. They then stopped and were sent into reverse at a speed of 55km/h, striking an empty propane car which ruptured violently, creating an explosion and fire. A final report on the cause of the crash is due from the CTC about mid-March.

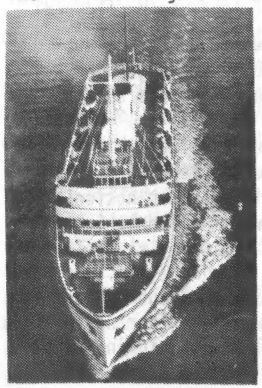


A CORPORATE CALENDAR was published by VIA Rail for 1983. Printed in both English and French versions, the calendar is not for sale, but is sent to various names on VIA's Marketing Dept mailing list. No trains are shown, but rather scenes from train windows, as painted by artist Bob Marchessault, a former VIA employee who is now an art instructor. There are four scenes, one for each season, plus the cover scene, entitled "Wintertide" which is shown here but will not reproduce well because of its pale and very subtle coloration. One scene was on VIA's Christmas card (RTN #258).

TRANSPORT 2000 CANADA has prepared the rectangular button illustrated here, for members. T-2000 is a citizens' group active in promoting better rail and other public transportation. Membership is open to those in the U.S. also. Yearly dues are $15. Address is: PO Box 248, Station M, Toronto, Ont., Canada M6S 4T3.



WEST TORONTO STATION was demolished by Canadian Pacific in the early hours of Nov 25, in opposition to the wishes of city officials and historical groups. The CTC was to give CP a tongue-lashing on the act in December, and the city threatened CP with a $10,000 fine. The Globe and Mail editorialized that such a "clandestine" act was "in the CP tradition."



THE "PRINCE GEORGE" cruise ship's schedule of Inside Passage cruises from Vancouver to Skagway has been announced for 1983. Northbound cruise departures are on May 14, 28, Jun 11, 25, Jul 9, 23, Aug 6, 20, Sep 3, 17. Southbound cruise departures are May 21, Jun 4, 18, Jul 2, 16, 30, Aug 13, 27, Sep 10, 24. Contact Canadian Cruise Lines, Box 817, Station E, Victoria, B.C., Canada V8W 2P9.

THE AUDITOR GENERAL'S annual report, issued Dec 7, came down heavily on VIA Rail as being one of a stable of Crown-owned companies that consumes much money but

is under little or no accountability to the public. The Auditor General ignored the fact that it is CN and CP that are expensive in VIA operations, rather than VIA as such.

VIA RAIL'S TURBOTRAIN made its last run before its final retirement, on Oct 31. The 5:50pm departure from Toronto to Montreal was, unannounced in advance, the last operation of the fabled domed train. A Kingston museum might acquire the last two remaining Turbos.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

A chronology of SEPTA's post-Conrail transition:

EARLY DECEMBER: No settlements appear in sight, with most of the rail unions; SEPTA officials publicly state that shutdown of the rail commuter system is probable on Jan 1, 1983. SEPTA management insisting on major work rule changes and salary reductions--wants rail system operated along mass transit lines, with transit type work rules and salary scales.

DEC 20: The rail unions offer to continue working past Jan 1 without striking and to work under whatever work rules and pay scale SEPTA wants, provided negotiations continue and it is agreed that whatever final agreements are reached will be retroactive to Jan 1, 1983.

DEC 21: SEPTA announces that a shutdown of the system cannot be avoided even with the unions' agreement not to strike--says that if such an offer had been made several weeks earlier, plans to continue service could have been made, but at this point shutdown is necessary. Also announced that service operated under Conrail would cease early on Dec 31.

DEC 27: Court hearing on class action suit brought in behalf of commuters in attempt to force SEPTA to continue service without interruption. Ruling is in commuters' favor--SEPTA is ordered to continue operating "as much service as possible."

DEC 28: SEPTA Board meets, agrees to honor ruling and not seek appeal; however, service after Jan 1 will operate under special temporary schedules for unspecified period pending crew training/qualification, equipment inspection, etc.

DEC 30: Temporary timetables to be effective Jan 1 released--service overall to be provided at 18% of normal weekday levels, with limited service on all ex-Reading routes and on the Paoli line, with no service operated until further notice on the remaining ex-Pennsy routes.

DEC 31: Final day of Conrail operation. Last Conrail train to leave center city was the 6pm train from Reading Terminal to West Trenton.

JAN 1: SEPTA operations began at noon (first train leaving Paoli at 12:00) under the temporary timetable.

JAN 4: Extra trains added--four on the Paoli line and a total of 17 on the ex-Reading side. No new timetable for Reading side, but new timetable dated Jan 5 released to show increased Paoli line service.

JAN 6: Full service under the Oct 1982 timetables restored to Reading side; Paoli line service to operate daily under old Saturday schedule until further notice. (Timetable dated Jan 6 prepared for Paoli line, used primarily as station notice rather than for public distribution.)

JAN 8: Service restored under old Saturday schedule between Philadelphia and Swarthmore. Special timetable prepared showing only shuttle bus service Swarthmore-Media-West Chester. Saturday schedule to run daily until further notice.

JAN 11: Service under old Saturday schedule restored between Philadelphia and Marcus Hook--service into Delaware officially discontinued. Saturday schedule to be run daily until further notice.

JAN 13: Service restored to Chestnut Hill West and Ivy Ridge/Manayunk lines, again under the old Saturday schedule to be operated daily until further notice.

JAN 15: Service restored to Trenton; old Saturday schedule to remain in effect

daily until further notice.

As of Jan 15, operations under old Saturday schedules in effect daily on all ex-Pennsy lines. No indication when normal weekday operations will resume.

★ ★ ★

OXNARD COMMUTER TRAIN was still in operation as of the end of January. The latest new station, Moorpark, opened on Jan 26, and the Burbank Airport station is expected to open soon. Caltrans said that the Camarillo, Northridge and Burbank stations will not be built because of the budget cut. As reported last issue, the ICC recently ruled that Caltrans must pay the SP $588,000 per month to operate that train, a figure that almost everyone except SP agrees is grossly excessive. Appeals are being sought. There is a lot of support for the train in the areas it serves. Petitions with 1800 signatures were sent to Governor Deukmejian in January. The cities of Oxnard and Simi Valley and Ventura County have each donated funds to hire an attorney to look into the legality of the SP's charges for operating the trains. Among actions being considered against SP is the elimination of various government benefits that the railroad receives.

MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA officials have formed a task force to begin buying Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way between San Rafael and Novato to be used eventually for a transit system, possibly a light rail line. It parallels highway 101, which is congested and cannot be widened because of opposition from residents.

LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD commuters into New York were delayed Jan 27 by a faulty switch at Penn Station. At the same time, service on the J and M subway lines was disrupted by a broken Con Ed steam pipe, and later in the afternoon two IND lines were disrupted for an hour by a derailed work train in Brooklyn.

AN MBTA TROLLEY was chartered by a group of enthusiastic supporters of governor Michael Dukakis to travel to his Boston inauguration ball in January, repeating an event that dates back to 1975.

NEW YORK'S GOVERNOR Cuomo has joined a movement to eliminate the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and campaigned against the MTA in seeking office. The anti-MTA movement is growing, reports Newsday (Jan 9).

LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD refurbished the interior of diesel coach 2854, and asked riders for their written comments on the job. The interior consist of M-2 electric car seats (3-2), repainted white ceiling, red indoor-outdoor carpeting on side walls to ceiling, and airline-style section divider in car middle, where forard-facing seats meet backward-facing seats.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY predicts that transit funds from its ½¢ sales tax will be $64 million less than previous forecasts--only $224 million per year--because of the recession, at the same time that Gov. Deukmejian plans to cut state funds for mass transit. This could jeopardize the planned L.A. subway & L.A.-Long Beach line.

FY 84 BUDGET SENT TO CONGRESS

The White House sent its FY 1984 budget to Congress on Jan 31. The budget includes $682 million for Amtrak; however, it does not include funds for the CARDINAL, and its asks that section 403-b be cut back so that state must pay 100% of the costs of 403-b trains (at present the state pays 55% the first year and 35% in succeeding years). NARP said it will fight to change these two provisions, and to increase the total funding for Amtrak.

The Reagan budget proposes to end all Federal operating assistance for mass transit systems by 1985, cutting the funding 69% in FY 84 (instead of the 20% that was agreed on in bi-partisan Congressionalmeetings last year). NARP analyzed the transportation budget this way: overall, spending is up 15.2%; highway spending is up 36.6%; Federal Aviation Administration spending is up 17%; mass transit money is down 3.7%; Amtrak money is down 3.4%. (MinnARP reports that the Reagan administration, thru Drew Lewis, advised Amtrak not to lobby for inclusion in the new 5¢ per gallon gasoline tax. A half-penny per gallon for Amtrak would have given it about $500 million per year.)

AN EVENING AT BUENAVISTA STATION, MEXICO CITY

by Duane W. Roller

How long has it been since any of us saw that once-common sight, a Pullman conductor at his desk in a major station, lifting sleeping car tickets? Yet every evening at Buenavista Grand Central Station in Mexico City, this sight long-vanished from the U.S. is re-enacted: a long row of Pullman conductors as seven trains, two all-sleeper, prepare to depart the Mexican capital.

Thirty-four trains arrive and depart daily from Mexico City. Movements are bunched together in the morning and afternoon: there are 10 arrivals and seven departures between 6:23am and 10:13am, and the remainder between 3:30pm and 10:27 pm. Except for the AZTEC EAGLE, which departs at 8am, all sleeping car trains depart between 5:32pm and 9:32pm.

A recent evening spent at the station revealed an incredible bustle of activity as holiday traffic was at its peak. All sleeping car space from Mexico City was sold out the last week of December, despite the addition of numerous extra cars, and a total of 33 sleepers on seven trains departed each night.

The activity begins at 5:32pm, as train 111, for Oaxaca, departs on track 3, carrying 10 cars with the single sleeper "Neptuno" (ex-GN 1163) on the rear. I had arrived on this car the same morning after a wild ride over the mountains during which I was certain several times of imminent derailment.

After the arrival of train 251 from Puebla at 5:54pm, 92 minutes late, the stage was set for the first great event of the evening. Train 71, REGIOMONTANO, all-sleeper to Monterrey, had been loading for some time on track 7. Normally six sleepers are carried, but tonight the consist swelled to nine: "Irlanda", "Madrid", "Presa Chique", "Golfo de Cortes", "Presa Solis", "Capri"; then diner "Patzcuaro" and lounge "Club el Duque Job", followed by sleepers "Etiopia", "Oceania" and "Argelia". Over 200 people boarded, and precisely at 6pm the headlight was activated, two whistles sounded, and REGIOMONTANO slid away into the darkness. Five minutes later, train 11, carrying 11 cars but no sleepers, departed for Guadalajara.

Then there was a lull until 7:22pm, when No. 54 arrived 10 minutes late from Veracruz. As soon as that train was in, the equipment for No. 5, EL TAPATIO, all-sleeper to Guadalajara, was backed into the station--a train so long that both tracks 8 and 9 were needed to contain its 21 cars. There were 17 sleepers. I cannot remember seeing as many on one train before, even in Europe. At the head end was "Mercurio", an old heavyweight 12-1 car, followed by "Presa de Lopez Mateos", "Sierra Gorda", "Guasava", "Sierra Madre", "Galicia", "Marte", "Aragon", "Golfo de Bangala", then diner "Apatzingan", lounge "Club Monterrey", and more sleepers: "Catalina", "Granada", "Valencia", "Presa Infiernillo", "Valle de Mexico", "Rio Sonora", "Lago Cuitzeo", and "Guatemala." The last three were to be delivered to Pacific Railroad No. 1 at Guadalajara for Nogales and Mexicali.

Ken Maylath

Things were really bustling now: the high-level platforms were swarming with passengers. Track 1 contained EL MERIDANO for Merida, with a single sleeper. On track 2 was No. 27 for Uruapan, with two sleepers ("La Corregidora", "Presa Las Lajas") and 10 cars. Track 3 held EL JAROCHO for Veracruz, also with two sleepers. Tracks 4, 5 and 6 were empty, waiting for the arrivals of the AZTEC EAGLE and No. 30 from Uruapan, as well as the spotting of No. 3, the Monterrey local. Track 7 now held EL FRONTERIZO for Ciudad Juarez, carrying 11 cars including first-class coach 4273 in C&O markings, diner "Puerto Madero", and sleepers "Monte Cassino" and "Cruz del Sur." And tracks 8 and 9 contained the two portions of EL TAPATIO.

One by one these trains slid off into the darkness: EL FRONTERIZO at 7:50pm, EL MERIDANO at 8:10pm, EL TAPATIO at 8:30pm. The AZTEC EAGLE arrived at 8:29pm, 25 minutes late. The last departure was EL JAROCHO at 9:32pm, and then Buenavista Station's day ended with the arrival of No. 14 from Torreon a few minutes late at 10:45pm. The station would be closed for the night until the first movement at 6:23 the next morning.

THE BEANTOWN-BIG APPLE METROS: ANOTHER LOOK

by Pete Roehm & Roger Elswick

Two recent reports in RTN by New England reporters Bill McDonald and Kevin Gregoire have discussed the New England Metroliner service between Boston and New York which began last fall. Both reporters found the service up to snuff, with Bill arriving eight minutes early and Kevin ten minutes ahead. However, I made a Saturday morning trip on Nov 6 to the Big Apple and returned to Beantown on Monday, Nov 8 and was approximately 40 minutes late on both accounts, resulting in a refund in both cases of the difference between the premium fare and the standard coach fare ($10.50). The reason for this delay on both trains was the MTA's New Haven Region and its insistence on holding Amtrak captive to its locals.

Around Thanksgiving an article appeared in the Boston Globe and its writer had experienced the same commuter region delays that I had. The Globe reported that in the first ten days beginning Nov 1 the trains were only 25% on time. Ridership on my trains was 13% of capacity Saturday and 24% Monday. By the time the Globe ride them the ridership was up to 50% northbound and 35% southbound. But the service is slowly catching on, and the on-board services were found to be very much up to par.

My first trip that Saturday found only myself and one other gentleman having breakfast, but there were one dozen each for both sittings of dinner on Monday evening. Thus, with different reviews in the first few weeks, we made a Tuesday evening trip to Manhattan to handle business with Jim Nickerson, and thus boarded train 297 on Jan 11 at South Station, which departed on time at 5pm.

This train had but two coaches and a diner-lounge, down from the three coaches and diner-lounge of previous trips. Immediately underway and the beverage cart was at our seat and the Johnny Walker on the rocks tasted very good. We moved right along to Providence, bypassing Route 128 (the only trains that do so) and arriving early we picked up the balance of our load, bringing the total ridership to about 40, just one-third of what we could handle. Except for Fridays, this seems to be an average load in this post-holiday period.

We arranged for our dinner call to be at 6:00, and then adjourned to the lounge section of the car forward for what Dave Ross of LV353 would call evening "restoratives." Spirits to restore the spirit, such as would be found in Johnny Walker and a vodka/soda. There were ample Eagle snacks to accompany the liquid, along with the complimentary hors d'oeuvres which are taken the full length of the train by one of the staff and for which there is no limit on one's consumption.

Dinner at 6:00 and approximately half the car was filled. We had pre-ordered

Chicken Kiev which was one of three (Atlantic Seafood Platter and Cheese Plate were the others) and it was served on wild rice with assorted green veggies. Not too bad, but the seafood (if one doesn't count the lame shrimp) is probably better. The service was prompt and there was wine (French) to wash down the repast.

Thru New Haven on time, and then trouble. The drawbridge beyond was raised, and then we were further delayed by the usual MTA commuter service shenanigans which made us just a minute shy of a half hour late, but for which we nonetheless collected our refund--for the third time.

The conductor as well as Penn Station staff complained bitterly about the MTA's treatment of Amtrak, especially the Metroliners. And they all agreed that Amtrak (or someone) just force the MTA in one way or another to clean up its act or businessmen and others will simply not use the premium fare service. (On that Monday trip I heard a couple of the suited crowd grumble about the timekeeping and their questioning a return visit or not.) Certainly with but a third of the train full the service is not prospering all that much,yet it deserves to return some semblance of the old Merchants class operation to the once-proud New Haven tradition.

Business transacted, we ventured to Penn Station for the NIGHT OWL in which we would have bedroom D. Number 66 was in on time and our beds in "Pine Peak" were ready for us. We slept quite well despite the sleeper's being next to the baggage cars at the forward end of the train. The ride is not that smooth, but it could have been worse. Talking with the attendant, we learned that there were six passengers in roomettes, and two bedrooms were occupied. This is about average save for the pre-holiday period when all of the single accommodations were used. We were into South Station about 15 minutes late behind two F40s (altho an E8 is still used frequently as the second unit.

All in all our first class experience to and from New York was pleasant, but there clearly has to be something done about the MTA and its consistent delay of this premium service. Amtrak must address this issue and then resolve it if Amtrak is to have the kind of patronage it wants in the New Haven corridor.

A quick mention of excellent Amtrak action on lost and found: Unknown to me, I had lost my house key in the bedroom. Within two hours of arrival I had a call at the office telling me the key had been found and where I could get it. My name and address were not on the key. With my name on the attendant's list and also in the computer with a phone contact, Amtrak was able to take the name and recall the reservation from the computer, which gave them the phone number, and thus contact me almost immediately. Certainly a plus for Amtrak and customer relations.

★ CRESCENT IS SHORTENED SOUTH OF ATLANTA
by Adron Hall

Amtrak had planned, with the implementation of the Oct 31 timetable, to reduce the consist of the CRESCENT south of Atlanta to one engine and 6 to 8 cars. However, the storage area for the equipment in Atlanta wasn't ready, so the full train ran to New Orleans, but without a dining car crew--they got off in Birmingham. (Dining car crews ran thru during Thanksgiving and Christmas periods. Hopefully the full consist and crews will run thru during Mardi Gras.) Previously the consist was arranged with baggage, baggage-dorm, coaches, lounge, diner and sleepers. But on Oct 31 the consist was re-arranged with baggage, baggage-dorm, sleepers, coaches, diner, lounge, coaches and sleeper. The cars from the lounge back were to be left in Atlanta.

On Jan 13 the CRESCENT consist was finally reduced as planned. Train 20, departing New Orleans on Jan 13 was the first northbound CRESCENT with the reduced consist: engine 261; cars 1235, 1610, 2443, 4019, 4637, 8515. The diner crew stays on southbound to Birmingham and then the diner is used as a lounge to New Orleans.

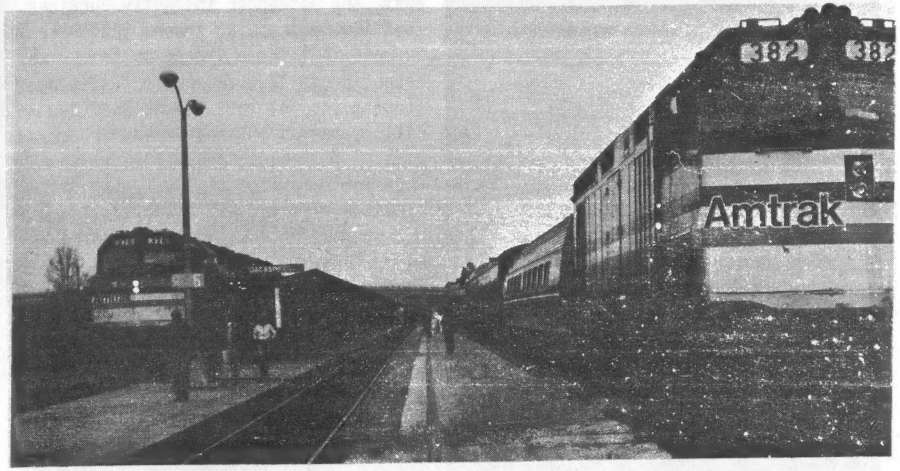
This arrangement saves Amtrak one diner-lounge crew and one engine's fuel, but

adds switching charges and a cleaning crew in Atlanta. It also inconveniences passengers: first class passengers have to walk thru several coaches to reach the lounge or diner; there is no meal service for the Birmingham-New Orleans segment (lunch and dinner southbound, breakfast and lunch northbound).

★ GULF WIND ROUTE IS INSPECTED
by Adron Hall

The passenger route of the old GULF WIND was inspected on Jan 11-13 by Amtrak and Seaboard System Railroad (SSR). The test train traversed the route from Jacksonville to Mobile on Jan 11, ran a round trip Mobile-New Orleans-Mobile on Jan 12, and returned to Jacksonville on Jan 13. The primary purpose of the test train was to evaluate the Mobile to New Orleans segment for possible service between those cities during the 1984 Louisiana Exposition (World's Fair). The tri-state (Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama) compact for rapid rail transit has funded a feasibility study for the route (being conducted by Gannett-Fleming Transportation Engineers), and the findings of Amtrak's test run will be entered into the study.

A 1977 study of the route (see RTN 146) revealed that with the great increase in population along the gulf coast (and connections to Florida and Texas), potential ridership would be high with a maximum of 189 PM/TM. However, L&N Railroad quashed that effort with their demand of several million dollars to upgrade the line before passenger service would be possible. But the railroad's attitude has changed recently, perhaps due to the gradual shift of control from Louisville to Jacksonville, and the positive passenger train attitude of the SCL, now all under SSR. Also, the Mobile-New Orleans route has been upgraded over the last three years. Welded rail is in place for virtually the entire length, and new ballast and ties are still being installed near New Orleans. Most of the route would be capable of handling train speeds to about 70 mph except for the portion between St. Louis and Ocean Springs, Mississippi. This 35-mile segment has 37 grade



The inspection train (right) prepares to leave Jacksonville on Jan 11, as the southbound SILVER METEOR (left) arrives. On the center track, an SCL switcher will split the east and west coast section of the METEOR. Photo by Jack M. Turner.

crossings, many protected only "cross bucks",in populated areas of several towns which impose speed restrictions of 30mph. This will apparently be the biggest obstacle to the service.

The test train departed Mobile at 8am, arrived New Orleans at 12:35pm, departed New Orleans at 1pm, and arrived Mobile at 4:56pm. Westbound, the train arrived at Bay St. Louis one-half hour early and had to wait 30 minutes for local dignitaries to arrive. Eastbound, only brief stops were made at Bay St. Louis, Gulfport and Pascagoula. Aboard the train, in addition to Amtrak and Seaboard officials, were several representatives of the tri-state compact, members of the Louisiana Association of RR Passengers, Alabama ARP, Jack Martin of NARP, and reporters and camera crews from TV stations in Biloxi and Mobile.

The train ran at 60mph except over the 35-mile restricted segment at 30mph. The 143-mile route was covered in 3 hours, 56 minutes. This is only about 36mph average speed, but with a few adjustments and increases in speed the trip could be about 3½ hours, for an average speed of over 40mph. It is felt that, even at this speed, the service could be a success, given the combination of attractive destinations (New Orleans and the beach resorts of Mississippi), the 1984 World's Fair, and connections to the SUNSET LIMITED and CITY OF NEW ORLEANS.

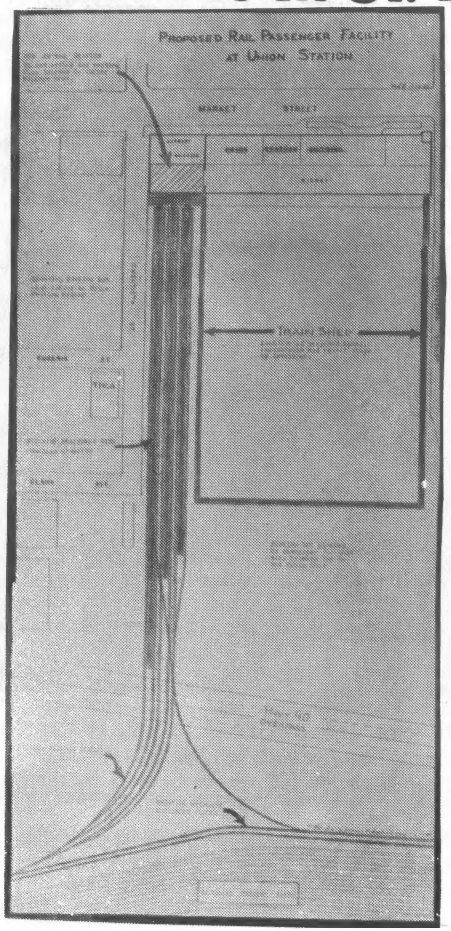
The train would be a state-supported (via the tri-state compact) 403-B service. If Florida joined the compact, the service could be extended to attractive Florida destinations such as the state capital of Tallahassee, the growing central Florida recreation areas around Orlando, and connections to the east and northeast via Jacksonville.

The test train consisted of one F40 locomotive, #382; Amfleet II coach 25081, L&N power car 363, L&N office car 363, and SCL office car 308. The two L&N cars have the same number and seem permanently coupled. According to Amtrak officials, Amtrak inspection car 10,000 was not used because Amtrak President Graham Claytor was conducting his monthly inspection of the NE Corridor in it.

This was the first time Amtrak equipment has been seen in northwest Florida, and it surprised many people. Since the demise of the FLORIDIAN thru Valdosta, Thomasville (GA) and Dothan (AL), there has been no passenger service close to the Florida Panhandle. The last Jacksonville-New Orleans passenger train was the GULF WIND, which was discontinued when Amtrak took over on May 1, 1971.

(Jack M. Turner also contributed to this report)

Meet Me In St. Louis, Amtrak



"For a city with a magnificent if unused Union Station and a rich railroading heritage, it is a daily humiliation for St. Louis that Amtrak passengers must entrain and disembark at a miserable hut on South Sixteenth Street. Arriving thus in the Gateway to the West, the passenger instantly surmises that the railroading powers that be have decreed that those who go by train must never forget that theirs is a second-class method of travel--and that the city is content to suffer the embarrassment of its depot in resigned silence." Thus editorialized the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in its Jan 6 issue.

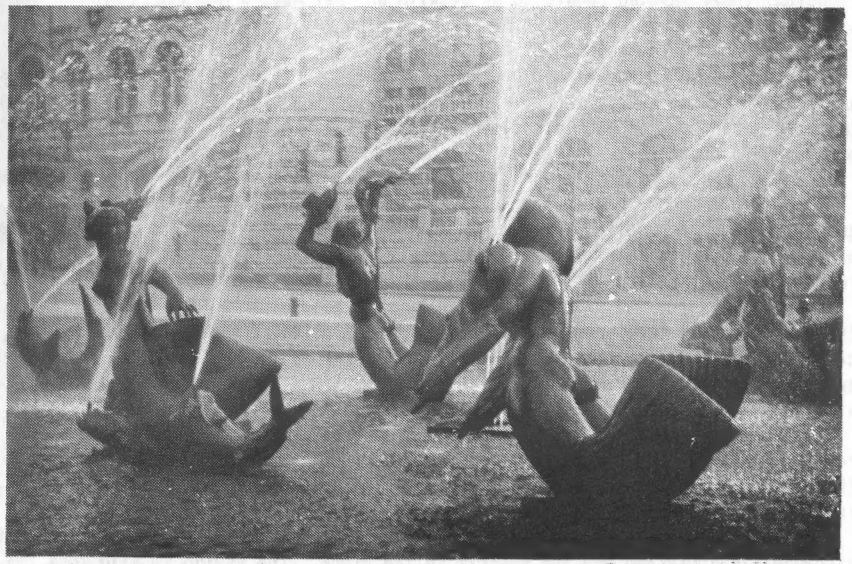
But now, as the paper goes on to note, that situation may be about to change, as Amtrak has indicated that it is favorable to a return to the magnificent old Union Station structure from which it fled on Oct 31, 1978.

Amtrak, as reported last issue, is now engaged in serious consideration of the proposed move, as are the redevelopers of Union Station. (Other options are to stay in the trailer facility it now occupies, or to build a new one.)

The proposal resulted from a joint effort of St. Louis area rail supporters F. Travers Burgess, William G. Wullenjohn and Mark S. Bucol.

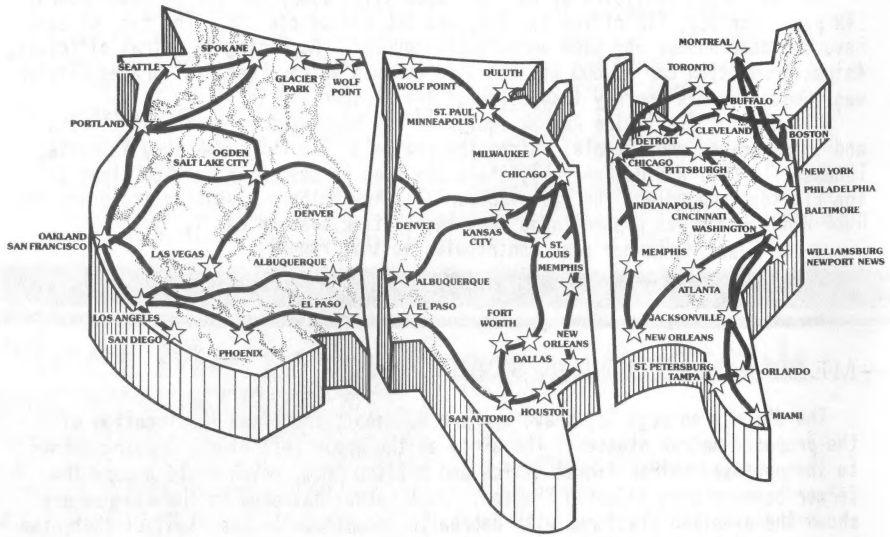
--MEET ME AT UNION STATION

The diagram on page 12, drawn by Mark S. Bucol, indicates the location of the proposed Amtrak station. The arrow at the upper left of the drawing points to the proposed Amtrak ticket office and waiting room, which would occupy the former baggage area of Union Station. Just below that area in the diagram are shown the existing platforms with umbrealla canopies. To the right of that, the large rectangle marked "Train Shed" gives the location of the developer's proposed hotel, restaurant and retail shop area. Below that is a planned parking lot. Legislators are strongly supporting the relocation proposal, and it is hoped that Amtrak will make known its decision in the immediate near future.



The elegant old Union Station building with its mermaid fountains out front. Photo by Peter Bretz.

AMTRAK ANNOUNCES NEW "ALL ABOARD AMERICA" DISCOUNT FARES



The following is the full text of Amtrak's Jan 24 press release on its new discount fare:

"Amtrak, which recently announced a new 'All Aboard Amtrak' slogan and marketing campaign, today invoted people to do so with an 'All Aboard America' regional fare offering sharp reductions for trips taken between Feb 1 and May 30. For major trips, savings could be hundreds of dollars.

"For any coach round-trip in one of three regions of the USA (including Montreal and Toronto in the East), the total fare is $125. The plan allows 30 days for the trip and a stopover in each direction besides the destination. Return may be over an alternate routing.

"The geographic regions under the plan are: WESTERN: From West Coast points to El Paso, Albuquerque, Denver and Wolf Point, Mont. CENTRAL: From El Paso, Albuquerque, Denver and Wolf Point east to and including the CITY OF NEW ORLEANS route between Chicago and New Orleans. EASTERN: From and including the Chicago-New Orleans route east to such points as Montreal, New York and Miami.

"Travelers using the plan can combine any two adjoining regions for $225 and travel within all three regions for $299. The fares for children 2 thru 11, accompanied by an adult, are $62.50 for one region, $112.50 for two adjoining regions and $149.50 for all three regions. Here's how savings under the new regional fares plan can amount to hundreds of dollars:

"WESTERN: A traveler could take Amtrak from Seattle to Los Angeles with an enroute stop at San Francisco and a return stop at Salt Lake City. Instead of paying the regular $272 coach fare, he would use the $125 'All Aboard America' fare, saving $147.

"CENTRAL: From St. Paul/Minneapolis, you could take the train to San Antonio with stops in St. Louis one way and Memphis in the other. The saving is $310 from the regular fare of $435.

"EASTERN: From Montreal you would travel via Amtrak to Miami with an enroute stop at Savannah and one in New York City on the return trip. Instead of the regular coach fare of $320, you pay $125, saving $195.

"TRANS-CONTINENTAL: For a traveler crossing the entire USA--say from New York to San Francisco with an enroute stop in Cleveland and a return stopover in Denver--the regular fare would be $696. Using the $299 All Aboard America Fare covering all three regions, the saving would be $397.

"All Aboard America Fare tickets may be purchased from Amtrak or its authorized travel agents from Feb 1 thru May 1. The last date tickets will be honored will be May 30 or 30 days after the first travel, whichever is sooner. No other discounts may apply and fares are not good for Metroliner or Amclub service. Those using All Aboard America Fares may obtain sleeping car space by paying the appropriate accommodation charges. There are no blackout dates for holiday travel. Reservations and tickets for the entire trip must be obtained prior to departure; however, reservations may be changed during the trip provided all fare rules are observed."

Amtrak's map above illustrates the three regions. Within any one region the fare is $125; within two adjoining regions it's $225; for three regions it's $299.

THE THREE-DOLLAR TIME MACHINE: RAILROAD NIGHT AT THE AVENUE THEATER

by Sylvia and Ted Blishak

Driving a steam engine is nearly a lost art, and so is the art of playing the Mighty Wurlitzer Theater Organ. Designed to accompany silent movies, these organs could duplicate the sounds of an entire orchestra; but now many have met the same sad fate as the iron horse.

Some railfans find the few surviving antique organs (which breathe with compressed air instead of steam, and have pipes instead of flues) intriguing. And, about every six months, when Railroad Night is celebrated at the art deco Avenue Theater in San Francisco, pipe and steam buffs may enjoy a silent railroad movie with live organ accompaniment.

On our most recent attendance at Railroad Night, by the time we had taken our front row seats in the faded but grand movie palace, guest organist Warren Lubich, in overalls and red bandana, had embarked on a short sing-along concert including "Chattanooga Choo Choo."

The bass notes of the Wurlitzer, which came right up thru the soles of your feet, faded away. Then the clock moved back into the 1940s as a short sound film, courtesy of AC Transit, brought the Key System briefly back to life. These interurbans, in connection with a bus network, carried passengers between Oakland and San Francisco on the lower level of the Bay Bridge, and covered nearly every corner of the East Bay from Berkeley to Hayward. The pre-computer-age system utilized a traffic control center where human beings monitored a board; lights indicated the position of all trains. Dispatchers, analyzing track and traffic conditions, sent signals to the cab of each train, illuminating a number showing the top speed at which it could safely travel. If the motorman exceeded that speed, the train automatically stopped. Tracks and equipment were checked and maintained with a fervor that seems refreshingly over-zealous by today's less stringent standards.

While the narrator enthused about plans for an expanded system, blueprints of streamlined coaches with oval windows flashed on the screen. Unfortunately, the Key System was totally scrapped a few years after the film was made.

As the historical short ended, Master of Ceremonies Bob Vaughn took his place at the Mighty Wurlitzer, and the silent melodrama "Westbound Limited" began. This tale involved a romance between the railroad president's daughter and an earnest

young telegraph operator (which began when her horse fell, pinning her on the railroad track in the path of an oncoming steam engine--our hero whisked them both out of the way just in time). Mr. Vaughn had many opportunities to make the organ sound like a steam engine, and also provided music for chase scenes, rescues, and villainous plots--an evil railroad officer hatched a plan to cause a collision between two trains, one carrying the girl's parents, the other engineered by the young man's father. The organ became part of the story, and we forgot we were watching a "silent" movie. It was as if a time machine had swept us back to 1922. The silent actors had to communicate everything by expression and gesture, and didn't let the action lag for a moment. The result: an art form that is somehow more absorbing--and very different--than most sound movies we're accustomed to now.

After intermission came a 1936 sound film, "Express Silver Streak", starring the Pioneer Burlington Zephyr--the first of the stainless steel streamlined diesels that would revolutionize railroading.

The story begins as a young designer tries to sell some conservative railroad executives on a fast, light and fuel-efficient engine to revitalize the sagging passenger business. "A new approach is needed to get people out of their cars and onto the trains, putting the railroads back into their rightful position as the number one mode of public transportation!" he declares, as the audience cheers.

The young man unrolls his design for the streamliner. "Looks like a fish," scoffs the railroad's president.

As the plot unfolds, so does a stormy romance between the designer and--you guessed it--the railroad president's daughter. The radical prototype train, with the assistance of a mad German engineer, is finally built. The inaugural run

takes place, paced by a string of 1930s autos, a Chrysler Airflow in the lead. Suddenly, the Zephyr loses power, and is passed by a steam engine. The engineer clears his cylinders as he roars by, burying the smaller streamliner in a humiliating cloud of steam (cheers from the steam enthusiasts in the audience). After this crisis, the experimental Zephyr goes on display at the Chicago Century of Progress Exposition, while the designer goes back to the drawing board.

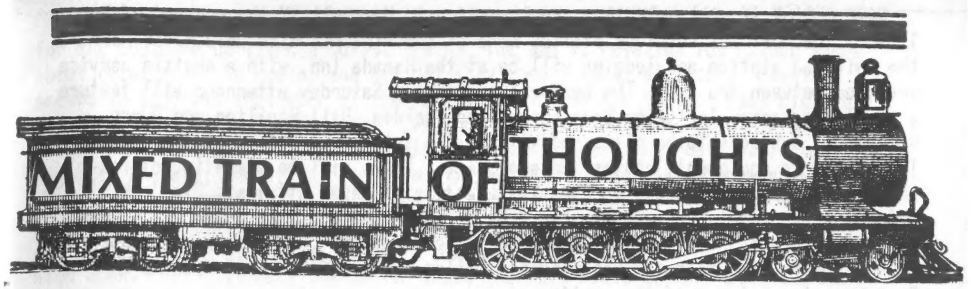
Now the scene shifts to some incredible location shots of the construction of Boulder Dam. The railroad president's son, who is working on the construction site, has fallen gravely ill with polio. Only an iron lung can save him, and the nearest one is in Chicago. It is too heavy for a 1936 airplane to carry, and a steam engine can't haul it there fast enough. There is only one hope: the Zephyr. Our young hero has rebuilt the engine, which now runs with a pleasant hum (the state of the art hasn't yet progressed to the diesels that go "ping ping" and "puckata puckata"). The railroad president balks at the idea of depending on this unproven, newfangled train to save his son's life until the designer promises to take the throttle himself. And now the diesel begins its race with death! The success of the 2000-mile non-stop journey is threatened by near misses with slow trains, by un-drawn bridges, and by attempted sabotage by the mad German.

Shots of this graceful articulated train streaking thru the mountains and across the plains are outstanding. Some were filmed from the rear of another train racing just ahead of the streamliner.

"Express Silver Streak", without using the modern gimmicks of sex, violence, or profanity, delivers all the action an audience can endure, and gives one a real flavor of what life was like on the threshold of the streamlined era.

For the price of a $3 ticket, we bought a lot of history, excitement and fun.

Bob Vaughn owns many of the vintage movies he screens, and by special arrangement is sometimes able to make them available to groups. For a list of his collection or a schedule of upcoming screen classics, write: Bob Vaughn, c/o The Avenue Theater, 2650 San Bruno Avenue, San Francisco CA 94134, or call (415) 468-2636. The next Railroad Night is scheduled for Feb 11.



SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR derailed 31 miles east of Winnemucca, Nevada on Jan 30 at 4:53am Pacific time. The eastbound train that left Oakland on Jan 29 derailed its two engines, nos. 313 and 363, and all six cars, leaving only the front trucks of the lead engine on the tracks. The train remained upright. The train was traveling at 7mph on a right-hand curve, when it hit a Western Pacific hopper car (empty) on the fireman's side of the engine, derailing the train. The incident occurred on joint SP-WP track. The hopper car reportedly got on the main-line track when an eastbound WP freight train, at 11:25pm the previous night, was setting off nine cars at the location (Red House, Nevada), and shoved the hopper car accidentally off the end of the spur track, fouling the main line but not breaking the signal connections. Fourteen people were reported injured: four passengers, three railroad crew and seven Amtrak crew. All were treated and released in Winnemucca, except for the SP engineer, who suffered broken ribs, and one Amtrak crew member who suffered a broken back and was taken by helicopter to Reno for treatment. Passengers were taken by school bus to a motel in Winnemucca, then later by charter bus to Ogden to await train 6 of Jan 30. WP built a temporary track around the derailment scene, completed by 8:30pm on the 30th. Damage to Amtrak equipment was estimated at $1,110,000; damage to the track was set at about $71,500.....

★ ★ ★

NEW ORLEANS STATION saw an especially large amount of activity just after noon on Jan 12, with the arrival of a large crowd on the CITY OF NEW ORLEANS; the arrival and departure of Amtrak's test train from and to Mobile; and preparation for and departure of the SUNSET LIMITED, train #1, combined with an SP Director's Special. The consist of the latter: engines Cotton Belt 7641, SP 3209, SP 3201, Amtrak 363; cars 1233, 39911, 32003, 38022, 34004, SP 140 "Stanford", SP 150 "Sunset", SP 295, SP 298, SP 292, SP 141 "Oakland".....

MORE DOME CARS are being converted to head-end power by Amtrak at Beech Grove. Besides cars 9321 and 9331 reported last issue, cars 9251 "Silver Penthouse" and 9252 "Silver Solarium", both former CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR cars, are reportedly also at Beech Grove for rebuilding. All of the above cars are dome observations. It is reported that either car 9251 or 9252 will become an Amtrak inspection car.....

★ ★ ★

LAS VEGAS HIGH-SPEED TRAIN was the subject of a meeting of Nevada and Southern California officials in Las Vegas on Jan 27. The proposed train would be a maglev design to be built by the Budd Company, and would run between downtown Las Vegas and a point just east of Ontario in Southern California, a distance of 230 miles. Trip time would be 70 minutes. The meeting was in large part to seek support of California state legislators; however, they were reported cool to the idea of sending Californians out of state to spend their money in Nevada. The construction project, to cost $2 billion, would be funded by both private and public funds. At the meeting, results of a feasibility study were released, and they showed that an estimated ridership of over 3 million per year is possible.....

NARP REGION IX will hold its annual meeting in Marshall TX the weekend of Mar 12-13. The business sessions will be held at the historic Ginnochio Hotel near the railroad station and lodging will be at the Ramada Inn, with a shuttle service provided between the two. The business meeting on Saturday afternoon will feature a panel discussion including Ross Capon, Andy Selden, Bill Hamilton and Byron Nordberg. Subjects to be discussed will be the future of rail passenger service in respect to equipment, routes and economics. There will be a meeting of Tex-ARP at the Ramada on Sunday morning to take care of Texas affairs. Big John Brigham will operate his private car from Dallas to Marshall on train 22 on Friday and return on Monday on #21. His car, the "Big John", is a former sleeper-lounge-observation from the Pennsylvania Railroad's GENERAL. Grif Hubbard of Texarkana is chairman of the meeting.....

NEW YORK DOT announced Jan 27 it would award a contract in about a month to Roy Track Co. for rehabilitation of the county-owned Sodus Bay secondary track of the Ontario Midland Railroad and the Newark yard in the village of Newark and the town of Arcadia.....

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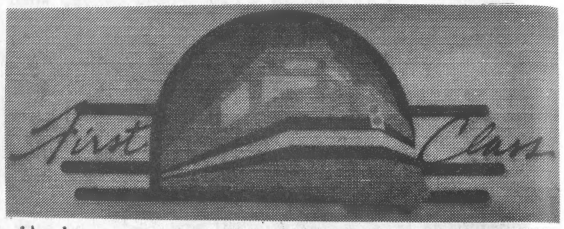
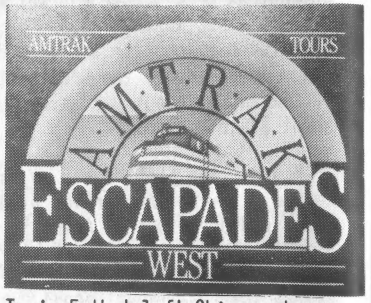


AMTRAK'S FIRST CLASS service on the Florida trains has its own stationery and brochures, all with the elegant F-40 emblem shown at right. Below it is another Amtrak drawing, from a tour brochure. Note the similarity in the hemispherical effect.....



CALIFORNIA WAS HIT by a succession of four heavy rainstorms the week of Jan 23, which caused considerable damage. The SP main line was flooded near Suisun-Fairfield, at a railroad location called Bahia. The routes of the COAST STARLIGHT, SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR and SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA were disrupted. The first two trains were detoured from Martinez to Sacramento via Tracy, missing the stops of Suisun-Fairfield and Davis, from Jan 29 thru Jan 30. Train 5 that left Chicago Jan 27 was terminated at Suisun-Fairfield and passengers bused on. Train 6 of Jan 29 ran the detour with a delay of several hours. Beginning Jan 29, the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA ran only Los Angeles-Oakland, with buses Oakland-Sacramento. This began with a makeup consist out of Oakland southbound on Jan 29. Also, on Jan 29 the northbound train of the previous day was halted just west of Sacramento station due to a failure of the "I" Street bridge, and passengers were taxied across the river and into the station. Flooding also affected the San Francisco Peninsula Caltrain commute line. On Jan 24 and 26 there was flooding in the Belmont area, and slow orders were in effect between Belmont and Redwood City for several days.....

★ ★ ★

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS southbound on Jan 30 broke down at Mattoon, Illinois due to an engine failure. An ICG freight engine towed the train, without head-end power, to Centralia, Illinois, where it was terminated. Passengers were bused on to their destinations from Centralia. Does that mean that they were bused as far as New Orleans?.....

THE C&NW RAILWAY laid off 1000 employees in December. The company had a loss of $13.2 million for the year.....

AMERICAN HIGH SPEED RAIL Corporation on Jan 27 announced its "preferred route" for the Southern California Bullet Train. The map it revealed was rather vague about details of the route, and did not show locations of stations. However, it seemed to indicate that more of the line would follow the present rail right-of-way than was previously announced. Two sections, north of San Clemente and south of Del Mar, were shown as not yet being determined where the route would be. Los Angeles, Anaheim, Santa Ana, San Clemente, Del Mar and San Diego were shown on the map as locator cities. The issuance of the route map at this time was done most likely to still criticism that the exact location of the line had not been made public yet. At its Jan 19 Board meeting, Amtrak approved an agreement with High Speed Rail that lets the latter share the rail route between L.A. and San Diego. This agreement was necessary, because Amtrak has the legal right to exclusive use of the route for passenger service. High Speed Rail must pay Amtrak an annual licensing fee and a percentage of its profits. Amtrak also is to receive 2500 share of High Speed's stock, and can appoint one-sixth of the company's directors. Graham Claytor will make such appointments. American High Speed on Jan 18 hired the firm of Woodward-Clyde Consultants, San Francisco, to perform an environmental study on the proposed Bullet Train route.....

SHOWN AT RIGHT is an ad in the new series of Amtrak ads in the "All Aboard Amtrak" series, reported on last issue. The ad shown here appeared an as enormous, two-page, full color ad in the newspaper USA Today on Jan 17. Similar ads are appearing in smaller size in other publications such as Time magazine. The ad here shows a Turboliner (power coach 151), and is headlined "Maybe your next flight should be on a train." It notes that Amtrak goes to more places than Delta, United, American and TWA put together. Quote: "On some long trips the plane may be more practical. But, on most trips, there are plenty of good reasons to consider the train. So the next time you're going somewhere, get your head out of the clouds. Do what 19 million riders a year do. Take off with Amtrak. And fly, without ever leaving the ground".....

★ ★ ★

AMTRAK'S AUTO-FERRY SERVICE was given the green light by its Board of Directors at their Jan 19 meeting. Service will begin in calendar year 1983, Amtrak said. "Amtrak's management will be guided by the 'Criteria and Procedures for Making Route and Service Decisions', first approved by Congress in 1975, which outlines certain steps which must be taken prior to starting a new service. Amtrak estimates that a combination of daily service during peak periods and tri-weekly service during off-peak periods would result in a significant profit and a reduction in the Corporation's operating deficit. The auto-ferry service would serve an estimated 140,000 passengers per year and would increase substantially the potential population now served by the Corporation. The Corporation will solicit public comments on the planned service, as directed by the route and service criteria and procedures, and will submit a summary of written comments to its Board prior to the implementation of the service." Only one Board member, Charles Luna, expressed reservations about the service. A Senator's office released some details of the Amtrak operation, published in the Orlando Sentinel: The Auto-Train terminals in Lorton and Sanford will be used, and Amtrak is negotiating for their use. Daily express train service in each direction would run Jan-Aug, and tri-weekly

Sep-Dec. Departure time would be 4pm from either end of the route, and arrival time 9:30am at either end. The passenger car consist would be 5 coaches, 2 dome coaches, one lounge, 3 buffet cars and 5 sleepers. The auto-carrying section would include 20 triple-deck car carriers, holding 12 cars each, and three double-deck carriers holding 8 cars each. Equipment maintenance would be in Sanford. Startup costs of the operation will be $4.4 million.....

★ ★ ★

AMTRAK PACKAGE EXPRESS expanded its door-to-door Package Express service nationwide on Feb 1, serving 55 major metropolitan areas, Amtrak said. Previously the service was available only in the Northeast and parts of California. Packages are carried on regular Amtrak trains, and pickups and deliveries are made by independent trucking firms. Amtrak has a nationwide toll-free number for Package Express pickup and delivery: 800-368-8725.....

SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA'S proposed extension to Reno NV was the subject of another meeting in Reno on Jan 19, attended by Doug Sibley of Caltrans, Bill Hoffman of Nevada DOT, Leif Lange of CRC, and Dan Lovegren of NARP (who gave us this report). The meeting was less upbeat than previous meetings. Hoffman said NDOT lacks the ability to commit funding to the project, and can give only "reserved support." Sibley said that due to the change of administrations in California, Caltrans will not ask the legislature to fund the SAN JOQUINS and SPIRIT after their money runs out, and the legislature would have to decide on its own whether to fund them. Sibley said the projected subsidy of $7.50 per passenger for the extra riders generated would compare favorably to subsidies the casinos pay to bus passengers.....

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RENO FUN TRAIN begins its seasonal operation Feb 4, running from Oakland to Reno, departing at 6:45pm. At noon the following Sunday it departs Reno for the return trip, with stops at Richmond, Martinez and Sacramento. The price of $109, including two nights in motels, is $10 less than last season. Oakland departures are each Friday Feb 4 thru Mar 25, then Apr 8 & 22, May 6 & 20. The Hi-level car consist will include a full lounge car with dance floor on the upper level.....

SEVEN FRENCH EXECUTIVES were in Florida in late January to promote the building of a TGV line in that state--a 320-mile line connecting Miami, Orlando and Tampa, at a cost of $1.28 billion for rail and electric catenary. The group will decide shortly whether to do a 9-month feasibility study of the proposed project.....

THE COAST STARLIGHT (number unknown) hit a car in North Hollywood CA on Jan 19, killing the driver. The photo of the wreck, with Amtrak engine 244, made the front page of the Los Angeles Times the next day.....

THE ALASKA RAILROAD can be taken over by the state. Congress passed a bill that permits it to do so, on Dec 21. The USRA will determine how much the state must pay the Federal Government to obtain the railroad.....

PUBLIC TV WILL broadcast "Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle", the Pullman porters' story, soon. In Chicago it will air on Feb 20.....

LATE NEWS FLASH

Amtrak has decided to take over the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR route, and will re-route the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR over the Rio Grande Railway between Ogden and Denver effective April 24, with the spring timetable changeover. The change will leave Wyoming without rail passenger service. The change will bring daily operation on the Rio Grande route, but will remove the domed ex-CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR equipment that is now being used. Reportedly, the railway wanted to cut its losses on the passenger train because of hard economic times and the strong possibility that it might become involved in a merger deal. There has been no official announcement yet from Amtrak, but this report came to us from reliable, highly-placed sources literally a few hours before we went to press.

News in this issue is updated thru February 1, 1983.

CARS & CONSISTS

*MONTREALER, train 60, New York Dec 23: engine 965 (E60); cars 1260, 2888, 2887, 2054, 20232, 28301, 21825, 21847, 21019, 21237, 21032, 21140.

*MAPLE LEAF, train 64, Toronto Dec 26: engine 315; cars 21226, 21129, 21243, 21135, 20224, 21184, 1373.

*CRESCENT, train 19, Trenton NJ Jan 25: engines 902, 911; cars 1209, 1622, 2465, 4608, 4014, 4734, 8511, 3114, 21011, 21062, 21136, 21812.

*SILVER METEOR, train 87, Trenton NJ Jan 25: engine 970; cars 1165, 1626, 2462, 2091, 25043, 25029, 28010, 8528, 3122, 25036, 25049, 2437. Train 88, same: engine 963; cars 1357, 1626, 2462, 2091, 25043, 25029, 28010, 8528, 3122, 25036, 25049, 2437.

*SILVER STAR, train 81, Trenton NJ Jan 25: engine 937; cars 1630, 2452, 2089, 25048, 25079, 28017, 8518, 3107, 25034, 25005, 2436. Train 82, same: engine 965; cars 1450, 2448, 2457, 2095, 25078, 25030, 28009, 8519, 3126, 25021, 25045, 2440.

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*LAKE SHORE LIMITED, train 48, Rochester NY Dec 23: engines 341, 347; cars 1615, 4001, 4641, 25073, 25070, 25064, 25051, 3105, 8501, 2435, 2933, 2080, 2987, 4604, 4004, 4610, 4002, 1176. (Breakfast served by reservation until 12:30pm.)

*BROADWAY LIMITED, train 41, Trenton NJ Jan 25: engine 956; cars 1610, 2993, 2083, 25069, 25038, 3110, 8517, 1262, 1357.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"I'm ... appalled at the attitude of Southern Pacific Railroad. (The SP is) stealing a train of the people, which is probably the greatest train robbery in history. ... We're going to have to look very closely at the way railroads operate."

--Ventura County Board of Supervisors Chairman John Flynn speaking of Oxnard-L.A. commuter train, quoted in Camarillo (CA) Daily News, Jan 19.

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RAIL FANTRIPS

Feb 26: Orange Empire Rwy Museum 25th birthday. Special "Quarter Century Ltd" train; special roast beef dinner at Lake Perris Travelodge ($7.75); movies and slides of early years. Dinner reservation: Box 548, Perris CA 92370.

Mar 25-Apr 13: South African Steam Safari 3; "Mountaineer" 2500-mi steam special w 16 classes of locos; 2-ft gauge Garratt; 2-day game safari. $3325. Philadelphia NRHS Tours, c/o Challenger Tours, 3672 Nottingham Way, Hamilton Sq. NJ 08690.

EXPRESS ADS

VIA RAIL CANADA, AMTRAK, EURAIL PASS, 20th CENTURY RAIL TOURS - Tickets and reservations - WE KNOW HOW! One call does it all. Pay by credit card or check.

DINING CAR CHINA, glasses, silver cloth. Timetables, guides, stationery, rules, metal & Pullman items, annual reports. Many railroads. Long 37¢ stamped envelope brings list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, KS 67213. Will buy items.

May 29: Challenger No. 3985 will power mainline excursion on the Union Pacific. Denver/Laramie/Denver trip will feature 3985 on Sherman Hill; diesel power on Colorado portions. Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, P.O. Box 2391, Dept. N, Denver, CO 80231. SAE appreciated.

SWISS RAIL TOUR, April 15-23, 1983. Write: Rail/Road Tours, Hyde Park Travel Bureau, P.O. Box 24, Hyde Park, MA 02136.

Feb 18-21 Deluxe first class private cars, the Pullman "National Border" and lounge car "Vista Pacifica" to Las Vegas and return via the DESERT WIND. Rio Vista Railways, P.O. Box 19992, Los Angeles, Calif. 90019.

May 19-June 12, 1983: Oriental Eclipse Express. Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Java & Bali. Visit Ambarawa Steam Rail Museum & ride Jambu-Bedono cog rail line. View the total eclipse of the sun in east Java. 2-weeks $3195, 3-weeks $3995. Voyages of Discovery, 737 Pearl Street #210R, La Jolla CA 92037. (619) 459-7250.

It's the rail event of the Century! It's RailFair '83 - The 20th Century Railroad Club's annual celebration of railroading. This year we're saluting what made trains like the Century and the Super Chief great...service. Come with us on an activity-filled weekend in Chicago on March 26 and 27 which will include: our 12th annual luncheon featuring nationally-known guest speakers, the "El" Capitan, a chartered Chicago Transit Authority elevated train taking you on a cosmopolitan tour of Chicago, Railroad Movie Night showing films of the great trains and the services they offered, and for the main event, the "Michigan Deluxe", a one-day all first class excursion over the ex-Michigan Central utilizing NYC Tavern Lounge Observation 48 and a former Union Pacific diner serving the finest dining car meals in America today. For complete information and prices send a large SASE to RailFair '83, 20th Century Railroad Club, P.O. Box A3258, Chicago, Illinois 60690 or call the 20th Century 24-hour Hotline (312) 846-3600.

WANTED: Old toy electric trains, Lionel, Marx, Ives. Send description, numbers, condition 1st letter to Trains 2916 Campagna Drive, Chalmette LA 70043.

Passenger train enthusiasts: Limited offering of slide sets AMTRAK, VIA, CN, CP, RDG, other Eastern passenger train views available until 6/30/83; send 20¢ stamp for brochure PT-1. Larry Eastwood, Box 41, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0041.

"ISSUES IN AMERICAN RAIL TRAVEL", RTN's little book on important problems with America's rail passenger revival, is almost ready for publication. Price will be $4.50, which includes relevant tax & postage. Full details will be given later in RTN. Rail Travel News, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1 per line of 80 spaces. Display Ads: only $1.25 per square inch. RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

LETTERS (continued from page 3)

The NORTH STAR never ran more than one sleeper, even tho it was generally sold out Sunday thru Thursday--a strong hint at who was riding the train. But all Amtrak could see was that the coaches did not fill up. Your SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA, I understand, ran up to three sleepers, but did the coaches fill up? No businessman (save for a railfan) is going to sit up all night. He has to have sleeping car space. Further, he/she needs single-person space. Business people, even when traveling in a group, are not like a batch of railfans traveling in a group. Most times the railfans are willing to double up; not the businessman. Yet Amtrak's stupid fare structure, which requires 1½ fares just in order to pay the room charge in a bedroom puts the cost of such a trip above that which can be justified by expense account. Therefore, Amtrak removes six rooms that could be sold. I would almost bet you a year's subscription to RTN that many times (except during travel season) the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA left its origin with all the roomettes sold out and many of the bedrooms begging. Why does Amtrak prefer to keep space empty rather than sell it?

I have never understood Amtrak's total contempt for the business passenger (outside the NE Corridor, that is). Amtrak does not advertise for business people, they offer no club car service, the short runs (i.e., overnight) have no decent food service. There are no overnight trains providing decent service, arriving prior to business hours from Chicago to New York, Washington DC, Boston, Dallas, Kansas City, St. Louis, Denver, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Detroit or New Orleans (altho #58 is close). Why, why, why??

I have never understood Amtrak's schedule policy outside the NE Corridor. It seems that they are deliberately trying to schedule their trains at the most inconvenient hours for the business passengers, which is the airlines' largest class of customer. The business traveler is on an expense account and will spend, spend, spend. Why won't Amtrak understand that simple little fact?

I wish you well for your SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA. But unless you fill those coaches, the train is a failure. No other measure will be made, and off it will go.

H. Martin Swan
St. Paul, Minnesota

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Amtrak award

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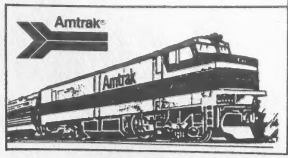

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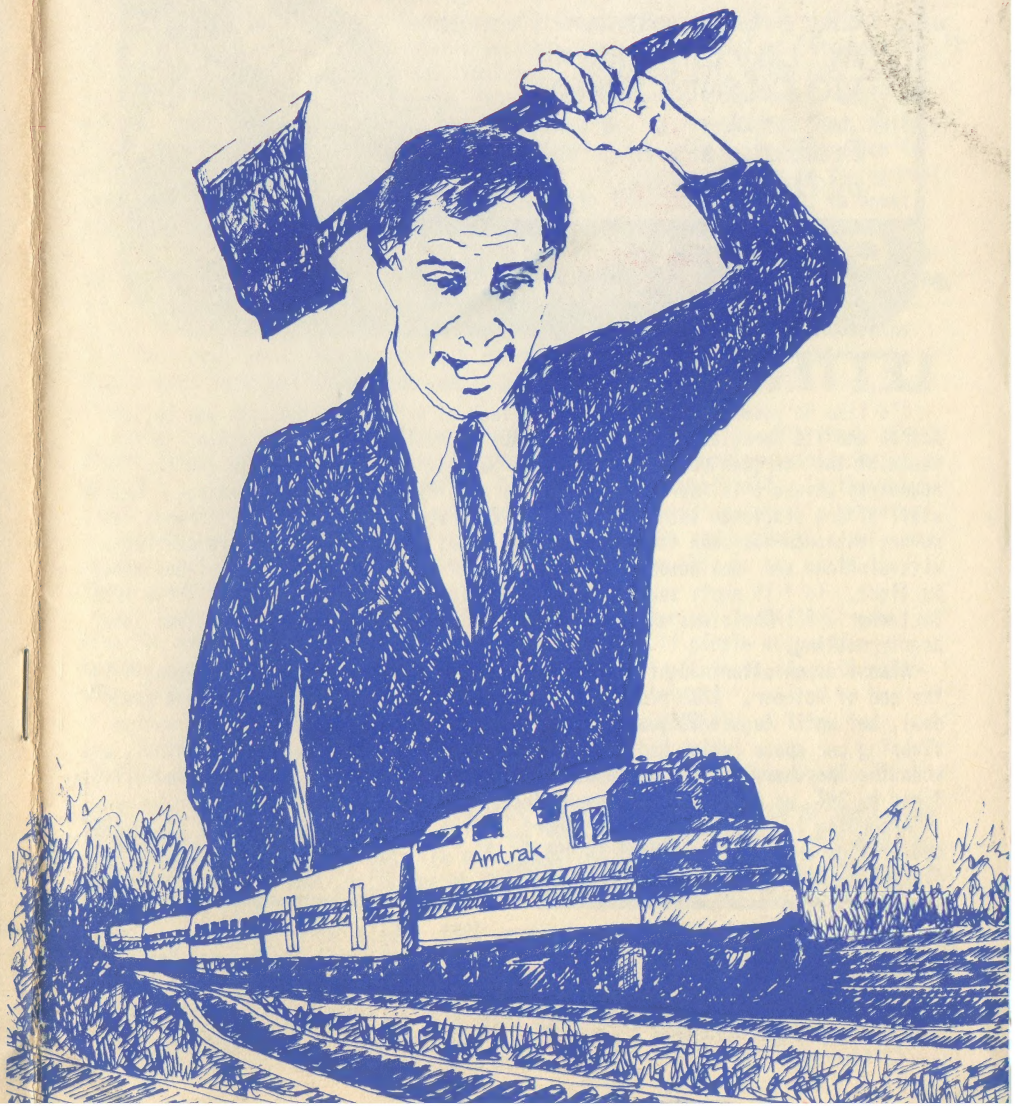

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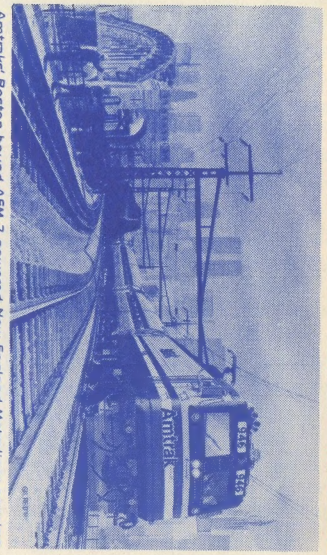

Amtraks' Boston-bound AEM-7 powered New England Metroliner passing the museum-bound GG-1 on the historic Hell Gate Bridge.

Amtrak's 1983 calendar, pictured here, is now available.

This year's calendar features another beautiful painting by artist Gil Reid, from a series done exclusively for Amtrak.

The calendars are $3.50 each. Or you can get 2 for $6.00 and 3 for $8.00. Calendars for 1980, 1981 and 1982 are also available at the same price.

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